

**Macroom Town Council**

Macroom Town Development Plan 2009

Variation No.1

**Habitats Directive Assessment Screening Statement**

**Cork County Council**  
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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Context**

1.1.1 The Macroom Town Plan was adopted in 2009 and sets out planning policy for the town until 2015. It is now proposed to make a variation to the plan in order to bring it into compliance with recent changes in legislation and Government policy. The purpose of the variation is to introduce a core strategy, as prescribed by the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, to include revised text arising from the obligations on planning authorities under section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts in relation to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, and to make some changes to the plan to ensure compliance with the obligations on planning authorities under the Birds and Habitats Directives.

1.1.2 In accordance with requirements under the EU Habitats Directive (43/92/EEC) and EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), the impacts of the policies and objectives of all statutory land use plans and proposed variations to these, on certain sites that are designated for the protection of nature (Natura 2000<sup>1</sup> sites), must be assessed as an integral part of the process of drafting, amending or varying a landuse plan. This is to determine whether or not the implementation of plan policies could have negative consequences for the habitats or plant and animal species for which these sites are designated, and to avoid such consequences. This assessment process is called a Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA), and must be carried out for all stages of the process of making a variation to a landuse plan.

1.1.3 The proposed variation has been assessed in accordance with this requirement and the results of that assessment are presented in this report. The proposed variation is set out in 'Proposed Variation to the Macroom Town Development Plan, 2009 Variation No. 1.

### **1.2 Legislative Background Habitats Directive Assessment**

1.2.1 Habitats Directive Assessment is a process which involves the evaluation of the potential impacts of plans and projects on Natura 2000 sites and the habitats and species that they support and, where necessary, the development of mitigation measures to avoid any such impacts. It is an iterative process which runs parallel to and informs the plan making process, involving analysis and review of draft policies, or amendments/variations, as they emerge during each stage of plan making. Within this process, regard must also be had to the potential for policies or amendments to policies, to contribute to impacts which on their own may be acceptable, but which could be significant when considered in combination with the impacts arising from the implementation of other plans or policies.

1.2.2 Articles 6(3) of the Directive sets out the requirement for the assessment of plans and projects affecting Natura 2000 sites as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Natura 2000 sites include Special Areas of Conservation designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas designated under the Birds Directive. Special Areas of Conservation are sites that are protected because they support particular habitats and/or plant and animal species that have been identified to be threatened at EU community level. Special Protection Areas are sites that are protected for the conservation of species of birds that are in danger of extinction, or are rare or vulnerable. Special Protection Areas may also be sites that are particularly important for migratory birds. Such sites include internationally important wetlands.

*6(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site and subject to the provision of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.*

1.2.3 Article 6(4) of the Directive deals with derogation procedures, where it is decided to proceed with a plan/project despite a finding that negative impacts are likely.

*6(4) If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.*

*Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment, or further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.*

1.2.4 Where a variation is proposed to a plan, the process of Habitats Directive Assessment may result in a recommendation to modify the wording of the proposed variation, or, if significant issues arise, a recommendation not to proceed with the variation.

1.2.5 The European Union has provided guidance as to how to complete a Habitats Directive Assessment for land use plans which identifies four main stages in the process as follows:

Stage One: Screening

The process which identifies what might be likely impacts arising from a plan on a Natura 2000 site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage Two: Appropriate assessment

Where the possibility of significant impacts has not been discounted by the screening process, a more detailed assessment is required. This is called an appropriate assessment and involves the consideration of the impact of the plan on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, having regard to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, it involves an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.

**Stage Three: Assessment of alternative solutions**

Should the conclusion of the appropriate assessment be that there are likely to be impacts which will affect the overall integrity of the Natura 2000 site, then it is required to examine alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan that avoids such impacts. Stage three of a Habitats Directive Assessment involves the assessment of alternative solutions.

**Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.**

Should it be found there are no viable alternative solutions to avoid adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 site, and should it be agreed that the plan can proceed despite such impacts (which can only be for overriding reasons of public interest), then compensatory measures must be put in place in advance of the implementation of the plan/project. The fourth stage of the habitats directive assessment process involves the assessment of the proposed compensatory measures.

1.2.6 The assessment may stop at any of the above stages if significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites can be ruled out.

1.2.7 The requirement to carry out Habitats Directive Assessments on development plans and proposed variations to these, and the process by which this must be completed, is set out in part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2010. Development plans including County Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Town Plans and variations to these may only be adopted where it has been shown through this process that impacts affecting the integrity of Natura 2000 sites have been ruled out. Where these have not been ruled out, the plan / variation may only proceed where it has been demonstrated that there are no reasonable alternative solutions, that there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest to proceed with the plan, and that compensatory measures have been designed, assessed, and approved by the Minister and have been put in place in advance of the adoption of the plan. In every case in which a local authority envisages approving or proceeding with a plan or project on the grounds of overriding public interest, the Minister must be consulted.

1.2.8 This report presents the first phase of the Habitats Directive Assessment process, being the screening of the proposed variation. All of the proposed additions and modifications have been reviewed to determine whether they give rise to a potential for significant impacts to occur on qualifying features of any Natura 2000 sites.

1.2.9 The screening of the proposed variation to the Macroom Town Development Plan 2009, has ruled out the potential for the changes to give rise to significant impacts on the Natura 2000 network.

## **2 Methodology**

### **2.1 Data Sources**

2.1.1 The appropriate assessment of potential impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites in this study is based on a desktop review of information relating to these sites and to the habitats and species that they support, and personal knowledge of many of the sites. References and data used are cited in the back of this report.

## **2.2 Consultation**

2.2.1 This report will go on public display and be referred to Government Departments and other statutory consultees for further consideration during the consultation process. Submissions on same will be taken into consideration in the drafting of the final variation. Any changes proposed to be made to the variation will be reviewed by the AA team, prior to adoption and a final screening report which will be produced when the variation is adopted.

## **2.3 Approach**

2.3.1 The approach taken in the making of this assessment follows *European Communities, Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites, Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, 2002*, and on *Local Government and Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009*.

## **3 Screening of Proposed Variation**

### **3.1 Description of the Proposed Variation to Macroom Town Plan**

3.1.1 The proposed variation to the Macroom Town Plan has been prepared in order to include a core strategy (Part A), as prescribed by the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2010, to include revised text arising from the obligations on planning authorities under section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts in relation to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (Part B), and to make some changes to the plan to ensure compliance with the obligations on planning authorities under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive (Part C). A summary of the proposed changes to the plan is set out below.

3.1.2 **Part A** of the variation relates to the Core Strategy and involves changes to Sections 1.1 1.2 of Volume 1, to 2.6 of Volume 2, and to amend the zoning maps. The plan is being varied to include updated population figures for Macroom and updated figures in relation to housing requirements and land supply, to include a Core Strategy diagrammatic map, to include text clarifying that new development in the town is dependent upon investment in wastewater and sanitation infrastructure and to show the proposed new phasing on the zoning maps.

3.1.3 **Part B** of this variation deals with Flood Risk and includes changes to Section 1.3 of Volume 1 and Sections 2.6, 2.8, 2.11 and 2.12, and to the zoning maps. The overall approach to Flood Risk has been set out in Section 2.12.4 ensuring the Councils approach to flood risk management is in line with the Flood Risk Guidelines. It ensures that flood risk management is integrated with development proposals. There have also been changes to the zoning objectives.

3.1.4 **Part C** of this Variation deals with issues arising in relation to compliance with Part XAB of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 and has resulted in changes to Section 2.7 Natural Environment of Volume 2 of the Plan.

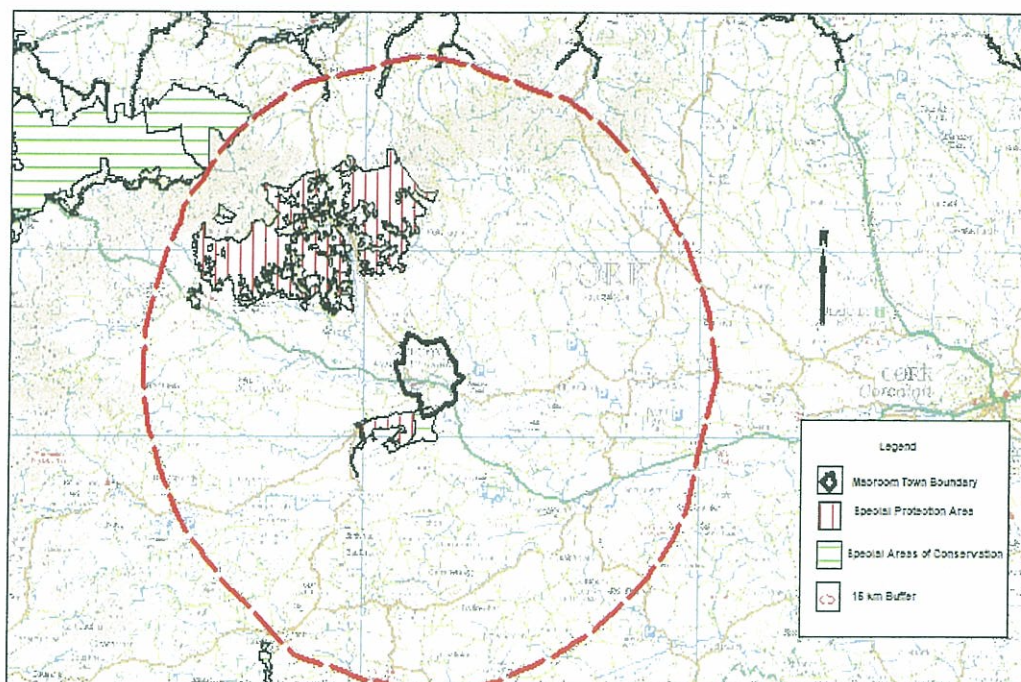
### **3.2 Natura 2000 Sites which Could be Affected by the Proposed Variation**

3.2.1 All Natura 2000 sites within the plan boundary area, within 15km of the plan boundary, and any Natura 2000 sites >15km from Macroom Town whose qualifying features include water dependant habitats or species, where these are downstream and hydrologically connected to the plan boundary area have been screened to determine whether the proposed variation

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would be likely to give rise to impacts. These sites are listed in Table 1 and shown on Map 1 below. The habitats and/or species for which these sites are designated are also listed in the table, as are the principle threats which could affect these. The threats listed have been identified through consultation with the NPWS and from written sources including the Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland, NPWS (2008), the NPWS produced Natura 2000 Site Synopses and in some cases, from personal knowledge of sites.

**Map 1: Natura 2000 Sites within 15km of Macroom Town**



**Table 1: Natura 2000 sites which occur within 15km or are hydrologically connected to Macroom Town**

Site Name	Distance from Town	Hydrological Connection to Town	Habitats for which these are designated	Species for site is designated	Other species and habitats of note occurring within the site
The Gearagh SAC 00108	Within Town Council development boundary	SAC is within Town Council boundary	Water Courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation; Old sessile oak woodlands with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> ; Alluvial forest with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Otter	<b>Habitats:</b> Alluvial grassland; Cutaway bog.  <b>Species:</b> Mudwort; Wintering waterbirds.
Great Island Channel SAC 1058	Approx 50km	The River Lee flows out of Macroom through the Carrigadrohid and Innishcarra Reservoirs and onto Cork Harbour. The Great Island Channel SAC is located within the Harbour, and is the channel located North of Little Island and Fota Island.	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Atlantic salt meadows.	None	<b>Habitats:</b> Wet grassland.  <b>Species:</b> Wintering waterfowl.

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Site Name	Distance from Town	Hydrological Connection to Town	Habitats for which these are designated	Species for site is designated	Other species and habitats of note occurring within the site
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC 002170	13.4km	No hydrological connection. This SAC is in a separate catchment.	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; Perennial vegetation of stoney banks; Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand; Atlantic salt meadows; Mediterranean salt meadows; Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculus fluitans and Callitriche - batrachion vegetation; Alluvial forest with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ; Old sessile oak woodlands with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> ; <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods.	Freshwater pearl mussel; White clawed crayfish; Sea lamprey; Brook lamprey; River lamprey; Twait shad; Atlantic salmon; Otter.	<b>Habitats:</b> Wet woodland; Dry woodland; Freshwater marsh; Wet grassland; Shingle Spit.  <b>Species:</b> Toothwort; Summer Snowflake; Flowering Rush; Common Calamint; Red Campion; Sand Leek; Wood Club-rush.
Bandon River SAC 002171	15km	No hydrological connection. This SAC is in a	Water courses of plain to montane	Freshwater Pearl Mussel;	<b>Habitats:</b> Wet broad-leaved woodland;

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Site Name	Distance from Town	Hydrological Connection to Town	Habitats for which these are designated	Species for site is designated	Other species and habitats of note occurring within the site
		separate catchment.	levels with the Ranunculon fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation; Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (alno-padion, alnion incanae, salicion albae).	Brook lamprey	<b>Species:</b> Salmon; Kingfisher
Mullaghanish Bog SAC 001890	12km	While in the same catchment, Macroom Town is 12km downstream from this SAC. The potential for any changes being made to the Macroom Town Plan to affect this site is screened out on the basis of distance and lack of physical, hydrological or ecological connection between the SAC and the town.	Blanket Bog and Active Blanket Bog	None	All of the habitats and species of biodiversity importance occurring in Cork are qualifying features for this site.

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Site Name	Distance from Town	Hydrological Connection to Town	Habitats for which these are designated	Species for site is designated	Other species and habitats of note occurring within the site
Cork Harbour SPA 4030	approx. 50km	The River Lee flows out of Macroom through the Carrigadrohid and Innishcarra Reservoirs and onto Cork Harbour. Cork Harbour SPA is made up of a number of discrete sites within the Harbour sited primarily on the river estuaries where there is mudflat habitat. The nearest portion of the SPA to Macroom Town, would be parts of the SPA at Dunkettle and at the Douglas Estuary.	None	Cormorant; Shelduck; Oystercatcher; Golden plover; Lapwing; Dunlin; Black-tailed godwit; Curlew; Redshank; Common tern; 20,000 wintering waterbirds.	<b>Species:</b> Little grebe; Great crested grebe; Grey heron; Wigeon; Teal; Pintail; Shoveler; Red-breasted merganser; Grey plover; Black-headed gull; Common gull; Lesser black-backed gull; Wetland and Waterbirds

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Site Name	Distance from Town	Hydrological Connection to Town	Habitats for which these are designated	Species for site is designated	Other species and habitats of note occurring within the site
The Gearagh SPA 004109	400 m	The SPA is upstream from Macroom Town but within the same hydrological catchment. The potential for the proposed variation to have an impact on the SPA is considered further below, having regard to proximity of the SPA to the town.	n/a	Wetland and Waterbirds	<b>Species:</b> Whooper Swan; Golden Plover; Duck spp; Goose spp; Swan spp; Alluvial Woodland and other habitats.
Mullaghanish to Musheramore SPA 004162	3.35 km	Not relevant	n/a	Hen Harrier	<b>Species:</b> Merlin. <b>Habitats:</b> Upland habitats including Blanket Bog; Heath; Upland grassland; Rivers and Afforested Land.

3.2.2 The National Parks and Wildlife Service is in the process of preparing Conservation Management Plans for all Natura 2000 sites in the country. These plans will have a range of conservation objectives which relate to the protection and enhancement of habitats and populations of species for which these sites are designated. In relation to appropriate assessment, regard must be had to potential impacts arising from the plan on the conservation objectives for all Natura 2000 sites.

The primary objective which applies to all Special Protection Areas is as follows:

- To maintain the bird species of special conservation interest for which the SPA has been listed, at favourable conservation status.

The primary objectives which apply to Special Areas of Conservation are as follows:

- To maintain Annex I habitats and Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status;
- To maintain the extent, species richness and biodiversity of the entire site.

3.2.3 Favourable conservation status of a habitat can be described as being achieved when its natural range, and the area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined below.

The favourable conservation status of a species can be described as being achieved when 'population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis'.

### **3.3 Analysis of Proposed Variation**

3.3.1 The variation was examined to identify whether any additions to the plan or modifications being made to policies, or text arising from it would be likely to cause significant impacts on any Natura 2000 site listed in Table 1 above, having regard to their qualifying features and conservation objectives. Each element of the proposed variation was considered in relation to each Natura 2000 site to determine if it would be likely to give rise to direct impacts on habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive for which each Natura 2000 site examined is designated. The potential for reduction in the area of any habitats within each site was examined along with direct or indirect damage to the physical quality of the environment (e.g. water quality) of each Natura 2000 site. Serious or ongoing disturbance to species or habitats in each Natura 2000 site was examined (e.g. increased noise, illumination, human activity); direct or indirect damage to the size, characteristics or reproductive ability of populations of species for which Natura 2000 site examined is designated. Activities which interfere with mitigation measures put in place for other plans or projects were also examined.

3.3.2 The potential for the variation to give rise to impacts on the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC, Mullaghanish Bog SAC, the Bandon River SAC and Mullaghanish to Musheramore SPA has been ruled out on the basis of the distance of the town from these sites, and on the basis that there is no physical, hydrological or other ecological connection between these sites and the town. While the Great Island Channel SAC and the Cork Harbour SPA are hydrologically connected to Macroom Town, the potential for changes being made to the plan to have any impact

on these sites is ruled out having regard to the distance of the town from these sites and the changes that are being proposed to be made to the plan.

3.3.3 The potential impact of the proposed variation on two Natura 2000 sites, specifically, the Gearagh Special Area of Conservation and the Gearagh Special Protection Area is considered further below. Part of the Gearagh Special Area of Conservation occurs within the Town Council boundary, and the Gearagh SPA is located in close proximity to the Town Council boundary.

**Table 3.2: Screening Matrix**

Natura 2000 sites	Site Code	Habitat Loss	Habitat Fragmentation	Disturbance to Key Species	Reduction in Species Richness and Density	Changes in key indicators of conservation value
The Gearagh SAC	0108	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
Great Island Channel SAC	1058	X	X	X	X	X
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC	2170	X	X	X	X	X
Mullaghanish Bog SAC	1890	X	X	X	X	X
Bandon River SAC	2171	X	X	X	X	X
The Gearagh SPA	4109	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
Cork Harbour SPA	4030	X	X	X	X	X
Mullaghanish to Musheramore SPA	4162	X	X	X	X	X

3.3.4 In relation to the proposed inclusion of a core strategy to the plan the following was considered:

- whether the strategy would direct development in any phase into or adjacent to the The Gearagh SAC and the Gearagh SPA;
- whether 'strategic reserve' lands identified in the core strategy lie within, adjacent to or within either of these sites;
- whether the core strategy would be likely to increase pressure on the towns waste water treatment infrastructure beyond that which was set out in the plan;
- whether the core strategy increases the risk of storm water surges/flooding downstream of The Gearagh.

- whether the population target set out in the variation could give rise to increased levels of abstraction from the River Lee upstream of The Gearagh SAC and SPA.

No potential for impact on any Natura 2000 site arising from the proposed insertion of a core strategy into the plan was identified, having regard to the questions above.

3.3.5 It is considered that the proposed insertion of policy relating to the management of flood risk would be likely to have generally positive consequences for the environment. No conflicts with any Natura 2000 sites were identified.

3.3.6 A number revisions are proposed to be made to the plan in order to ensure that it will not have impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site. These revisions are being made on foot of a letter issued by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (01/07/2011) requesting Planning Authorities to ensure that all land use plans within their jurisdiction are compliant with the Habitats and Birds Directives. It is considered that all of the changes being made to the plan arising from this element of the proposed variation will ensure greater protection for Natura 2000 sites and will not give rise to potentially significant impacts for any Natura 2000 site.

3.3.7 The results of the screening assessment are set out in **Table 3** below.

**Table 3: Potential impacts of the amendments to wording of text and objectives contained in draft Variation.**

Issue	Proposed Change	Potential to cause adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites
<p><b>Part A</b></p> <p><b>Core Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Changes proposed to Section 1.1, and 1.2 of volume 1, 2.6 of volume 2 and to the zoning maps.</b></p>	<p>The proposed variation target population for Macroom Town and Environs is 4,351 by 2020, an increase of 472 persons from 2011 figures. The targeted growth from 2011-2020 has been directed to the Town Council administrative area given the land supply available. Zoned land within the town has been calculated to be well in excess of that required to meet the needs of the town over the lifetime of the plan. No dezoning is being proposed at this point, however, a phasing approach is proposed to complete those developments where works are already commenced and to development which help consolidate the town by developing the more central sites ahead of those which are further out.</p>	<p><b>Potential for direct impacts on habitats or species</b></p> <p>There is sufficient land to meet the town's population growth targets to 2020. While parts of the Gearagh Special Area of Conservation are located within the Town Council boundary, the introduction of a Core Strategy into the plan does not direct any new development into areas within or adjacent to any Natura 2000 site, and no strategic reserve lands have been identified. There are no existing or proposed development zonings within or adjacent to the Special Area of Conservation or the Special Protection Area. <i>No direct impacts on any Natura 2000 site are expected arising from the introduction of a core strategy.</i></p> <p><b>Potential for impacts on water quality affecting Natura 2000 sites</b></p> <p>The WWTP for Macroom discharges downstream from the Gearagh Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area. It is stated in the new variation to the plan that there are issues with capacity at the existing plant which requires investment to facilitate new development in the town. Issues relating to capacity at the plant will not affect the Gearagh Special Area of Conservation, or the Gearagh Special Protection Area as these sites are upstream from the discharge point. The nearest downstream Natura 2000 sites are in Cork Harbour. These are the Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation and the Cork Harbour Special Protection Area. Potential impacts on these sites are ruled out having regard to the distance of these from Macroom, and having regard to the stated requirement to upgrade the facilities to facilitate future development in the town (see proposed changes to section 1.3.3 and 1.3.4 of plan). <i>No impacts on any Natura 2000 site relating to impacts on water quality are expected arising from the introduction of a core strategy into the plan.</i></p> <p>It may be necessary to find new water supply for the town of Macroom as the population increases. Abstraction of too much water can create pressures on the ability of a water body to maintain both chemical and ecological status. The provision of a new source of water for the town could potentially have impacts on Natura 2000 sites, depending on where the supply will be sourced. <i>The potential for any new water supply to the town to affect Natura 2000 sites would have to be investigated fully as part</i></p>

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Issue	Proposed Change	Potential to cause adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites
		<i>of the process of identifying and establishing any such source.</i>
<b>Part B Flooding Policy.</b>  <b>Changes proposed to</b>  Vol 1 Sections 1.3, & Vol 2 Sections 2.6, 2.8, 2.11 and 2.12- and to zoning maps A Zoning Map 5a.	Changes being proposed to be made to the plan to set out the Councils approach to flood risk management and new objectives on flood risk management. While no changes have been made to zonings, new text has been introduced to zones that have been identified to be particularly sensitive to flood risk, to emphasise the need for flood risk assessment to reflect the provisions of the Flood Risk Guidelines, and the need to protect the ecological integrity of sites designated for natural heritage.	The nearest downstream Natura 2000 sites from Macroom Town are in Cork Harbour >50km downstream, and are there are two significant dams between the town and these sites. <i>No potential for impacts on any Natura 2000 site have been identified arising from the proposed modifications to flood risk management strategy in Macroom Town.</i>
<b>Part C- Habitats Directive Compliance</b>  <b>Changes proposed to</b> Section 2.7, policies NE2, NE4, NE5  <b>New objectives to be included</b> NE-6 and NE-7.	Amendments to policy relating to the protection of designated sites and biodiversity generally to clarify and strengthen these.	These changes propose to strengthen the protection of Natura 2000 sites. <i>No potential for impacts on any Natura 2000 site have been identified</i>

#### 4 Finding of No Significant Effects Report

Proposed Variation to the Macroom Town Development Plan, 2009, Variation No. 1.	
Natura 2000 sites which could be affected by the variation.	The potential for the variation to give rise to impacts on The Gearagh Special Area of Conservation SAC and the Gearagh Special Protection Area SPA were considered having regard to the proximity of these sites to the town.
Description of the proposed variation	The purpose of this variation of the Macroom Town Development, 2009 is to introduce a Core Strategy, as prescribed by the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, to include revised text arising from the obligations on planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts in relation to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on 'The Planning system and Flood Risk Management and to include revised text to comply with the obligations on planning authorities under the Birds Directive and Habitats Directives.
Is the proposed variation directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 sites identified above	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with the plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)	Macroom Local Area Plan 2011; Cork County Development Plan, 2009.
Assessment of Significant Effects	
Describe how the plan (alone or in combination is likely to affect Natura 2000 sites)	<p>Potential for impacts on the Gearagh Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area arising from the proposed variation were ruled out for the following reasons:</p> <p><b>Introduction of Core Strategy:</b></p> <p>No strategic reserve lands are identified in the core strategy;</p> <p>There are no proposals within the proposed variation to direct development within or adjacent to any designated site.</p> <p>While the core strategy provides for a population increase, which could put pressure on the existing WWTP, this discharges downstream from the Natura 2000 sites, and so no impacts on these sites are predicted from additional pressure being put on this system.</p> <p><i>It is recommended that any the identification of an additional water supply for the town which may be required to provide for the population increase would require assessment of potential for impact on Natura 2000 sites.</i></p> <p><b>Introduction of revised Flood Management Policy:</b></p> <p>The introduction of a revised flood management policy reduces the risk of development being encouraged or authorised in areas liable to flood risk. This will have positive benefits for the protection of watercourses generally. No</p>

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	<p>impacts on Natura 2000 sites have been identified.</p> <p><b>Revisions and modifications to policies to clarify requirements relating to Habitats Directive Assessment and to strengthen the protection of Natura 2000 sites.</b></p> <p>Policies relating to the protection of Natura 2000 sites have been clarified to strengthen the protection of Natura 2000 sites.</p>
<b>Explain why these effects are not considered significant</b>	n/a
<b>List of agencies consulted:</b>	This screening report will be referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service for consideration. It will be available to all interested parties for consideration during the public consultation process.
<b>Data Collected To Carry Out The Assessment</b>	
Who carried out the assessment	Planning Policy Unit, Cork County Council
Sources of data	National Parks and Wildlife Service Site Synopses and other data relating to Natura 2000 sites.
Level of assessment completed	Screening
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed	This report

**5 References and Data Used**

Environment, Heritage and Local Government, National Parks and Wildlife Service. 2008. The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland.

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